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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the phenomena of shame and shaming from both psychological and sociocultural perspectives. Shame is generally viewed as a private, self-conscious experience in which individuals feel that a weakness or vulnerability has been exposed not only to others but also to themselves leaving them feeling deficient and humiliated. Shaming is considered to be the social process by which shame is induced intentionally or unintentionally in others. Although not all shame experiences are induced by others nor indeed are public, it is argued that social institutions such as schools play a role in perpetuating and condoning shaming rituals justified as encouraging self-conscious moral attributes in individuals. What remains unexplored are the unconscious dynamics of shaming experiences both at an individual and collective level and how these interrelate. This paper explores some preliminary case study data on teachers' experiences of shame and shaming in educational practice. Results indicate that there is some evidence that teachers may use shaming rituals systematically as pedagogical or regulatory mechanisms. Given the clinical evidence that shame and shame-induced experiences do not necessarily produce the intended adaptive outcomes and are more often associated with negative psychological symptoms, careful self-examination both at individual and system levels within education is needed. (Contains 54 references.) (GCP)

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# The shaming game: the role of shame and shaming rituals in education and development

**Ruth Leitch**


## Abstract

This paper examines the phenomena of shame and shaming from both psychological and socio-cultural perspectives. Shame is generally viewed as a private, self-conscious experience in which individuals feel that a weakness or vulnerability has been exposed not only to others but also to themselves leaving them feeling deficient and humiliated. Shaming, on the other hand, is considered to be the social process by which shame is induced intentionally or unintentionally in others. Shame may be short-lived or enduring; it may be functional or dysfunctional. Whilst not all shame experiences are induced by others nor indeed are public, it is argued that social institutions such as schools play a role in perpetuating and condoning shaming rituals justified as encouraging self-conscious moral attributes in individuals. What remains largely unexplored are the unconscious dynamics of shaming experiences both at an individual and collective level and how these inter-relate. In particular this paper explores some preliminary case study data on teachers' experiences of shame and shaming in educational practice. Whilst the case study participants espoused theories of enhanced professional behaviour, as a result of early shaming experiences, there is some evidence that shaming rituals may be used systematically as pedagogical or regulatory mechanisms by teachers. Some of these shaming activities are deployed consciously and strategically and have become part of the collective norms of schooling (although the intention to shame is not necessarily explicit or acknowledged) whereas others arise as a result of individual teacher behaviours and are often spontaneous and unconscious in origin. The source of such incidents, it is suggested, lies within the psychological history of the individual teacher and occurs as a result of re-stimulation, in the moment, of internalised shame experiences, which remain dormant and unexplored. By means of a process of internalised oppression, it is hypothesised that these individual pathologies can become systematic and culturally legitimised. A clearer understanding of such a mechanism awaits further research evidence. However, given the weight of clinical evidence that shame and shame-induced experiences do not necessarily produce the intended adaptive outcomes and are more often associated with negative psychological symptoms, this points up the necessity for some careful self-examination both at individual and system levels within education. As a starting-point teachers in training (initial and continuing) could be provided with appropriate contexts in which to re-examine critical, formative experiences, including those of a shaming nature, to ensure greater awareness of the rational basis for educational and disciplinary techniques employed and to delimit any potential negative or corrosive side-effects these may engender. Such acknowledgement would provide a minimum first step towards schools, as one social institution, breaking the cycle of damaging shaming experiences on young people.

## Introduction

From anthropological research, it is evident that some societies may be defined as being "shame cultures"[1] and most if not all societies employ some variety of shaming mechanisms (eg public disgracing, mockery, ostracising, stoning etc.) as part of their social control processes. In parallel, the considerable literature on shame as a psychological construct provides evidence of and debate on the role, phenomenology, function and processes of shame in individuals. However, within the emergent literature, there is inadequate articulation of the assumed dynamic interplay between the cultural role of shame and the development of an individual. [What exactly is the process by which the cycle of shame perpetuates within individuals, families, institutions, cultures and nations?] This paper proposes that, since the cycle of shame seems to be perpetuated by unconscious mechanisms at the collective and individual levels, social institutions such as schools, whose central goal is constructive pupil development have a responsibility to address shaming habits and procedures capable of interrupting or debilitating sound educational and pedagogical processes.

## The nature of shame and shaming

Although viewed as central to the human condition, shame remains an obscure and complex phenomenon to define. Outside theology and philosophy, there are two main historical strands to the literature on shame, one being psychological in origin with the focus on the phenomenology of shame and its role in intrapsychic processes and the other, anthropological in nature, concerning itself with the socio-cultural determinants and functions of shame and, concomitantly guilt, across different cultures. Approaching shame from opposite poles, these two disciplines have however tended to begin from the premise of shame as an emotion or affective state.

From a psychological perspective, shame is explicated as a private, emotional phenomenon associated with a range of experience characterised by embarrassment, discomfort, intense pain, woundedness, inadequacy,

[1] According to anthropological research (Mead, 1937, Benedict 1977) "shame cultures" can be distinguished from "guilt cultures" across a continuum. "Shame cultures" regulate the behaviour of their members via external sanctions, whereas "guilt cultures" are ones in which sanctions are internalised (Johnson et al., 1987). There is a definite tendency to identify "primitive" cultures as shame cultures and "modern" Western cultures as predominantly guilt cultures (Wallbot & Scherer, 1995 p467).

fear and anger (Lewis, 1992) in conjunction with behaviours such as head-hanging, blushing, poor eye contact, withdrawal and a desire to hide. Anthropologically, shame is viewed as a social phenomenon, central to the socialisation process (Lowenfeld, 1976) which plays a key role in "upholding the structure of society" (Morrison, 1983, p299).

In a customary sense then, shame is the subjective experience of an individual whilst, shaming is the process of actively eliciting an emotional reaction of shame in another to the point where the individual will conform to the social norms and standards of the culture in order to avoid the "bad feelings" aroused. On examination, the cause-effect mechanisms through which this process is considered to develop are complex and indeterminate, largely hinging on the paradigm through which shame and shaming are being studied. The psychological and socio-cultural approaches to shame will now be explored in further depth.

**Psychological perspectives on shame**

Shame has been defined mainly in relation to other affects such as embarrassment, pride and, in particular guilt[2], the result of which is that:

*Shame is an emotion insufficiently studied because in our civilisation it is so clearly... absorbed by guilt*

( Levin, 1967 p267)

In receiving less explicit attention, Scheff (1988 p400) describes shame as a "low visibility" emotion, the importance of which, according to Goleman (1992), is coming into sharper focus presently:

*"Psychologists admittedly chagrined and a little embarrassed are belatedly focusing on shame, a prevalent and powerful emotion which somehow escaped rigorous examination until now".*

There are many reasons for the neglect of shame but Freud's emphasis on the role of guilt[3] in his structural theory (1914, 1923) played a central part (Thrane, 1975). Within the psychoanalytic tradition, Piers and Singer (1953)

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[2]Even Darwin could not distinguish between shame and guilt (Lewis 1992, p31).

[3]For Freud, guilt, arising from fear of castration, is key in the development of conscience as libido (and in particular Oedipal) impulses clash with the superego's demands. He paid little attention to shame alluding to it primarily in connection with genital inferiority and forbidden libidinal wishes thus characterising it squarely as a feminine trait (Morrison, 1983 p296).

were the first to provide a sharp understanding of shame. In their interpretation, comparisons of self to others (through ego ideals) provide the basis of shame, resulting in feelings of inferiority and fears of abandonment, which culminate in the shame phenomena of blushing and hiding to compensate for the defect. It was Piers and Singer's conceptualisation of shame which led inevitably to the concept of self and subsequently the link between shame and loss of self esteem. The concept of self was also central to Helen Lewis's (1971 p36) phenomenological study of shame and guilt. Shame, in Lewis's analysis, concerns the whole self - the stimulus to shame being the deficiency of the self and its failure to live up to a deep ideal or attain a goal, whereas the stimulus to guilt is the action or omission of it which could have been taken by the self.

The phenomenological view of shame, which is generally accepted by theorists of diverse backgrounds, is a state of self-devaluation that can (but does not have to) emanate from 'out there'. Shame is located in the head of the person experiencing it and this experience is characterised by: (i) a desire to hide or disappear (ii) intense pain, discomfort and anger (iii) feeling one is no good, inadequate, unworthy and (iv) the self system being caught in a bind in which the self focuses completely on itself resulting in confusion and an inability to act (Lewis 1992 p34).

Gradually then, shame has emerged as an affect in its own right and one of equal importance theoretically and phenomenologically to guilt (Lynd 1958; Lewis 1971, 1992; Thrane 1979; Wurmser 1981; Morrison 1983).
Contemporaneously, in affect terms, shame is also distinguished from what are believed to be primary emotions such as sadness, anger, fear and enjoyment (Eckman 1973, Ekman & Friesen, 1975)[4]. Primary emotions are considered to be the distinctive biologically-based and universal building-blocks of emotion (Plutchik, 1980: Harris, 1989). By contrast,

[4]Paul Eckman's research has provided recent evidence on there being a small number of core emotions. He and his colleagues carried out cross-cultural studies throughout the world, including remote and pre-literate societies, on the recognition of specific facial expressions for emotions. Studies indicated a universality for fear, sadness, anger and enjoyment. This universality was probably first noted by Darwin(1872) who viewed it as evidence that evolutionary requirements had imprinted these signals on our central nervous system. Since then, there has been an ongoing debate on exactly how many primary emotions exist ( See Plutchik, R.,(1962 pp.41-42 for best discussion of the problem). Eckman (1972) considers neither shame nor guilt to be primary emotions because no specific facial expressions of these two states have been identified.

shame is viewed as a more complex emotion[5] since it requires self-consciousness. Self-conscious emotional states differ by definition from primary emotional states since they develop through self-reflection:

*"While primary emotions require a self to experience the state, self-conscious emotions require a self both to produce the state and then to experience it."*

(Lewis, 1992 p29).

With this distinction between subjective and objective self-awareness, shame clearly finds a place in the domain of current self psychology with its emphasis on the 'self' construct:

*In shame we become the object as well as the subject of shame*

(Lewis op cit., p34).

However, Reizer (1943) had already anticipated this distiction and sums it up in the succinct understanding that:

*"The man who puts us to shame interferes in the delicate process by which the I builds up the Me."* (p459).

**Socio-cultural perspective on shame and shaming**

From the anthropological or cultural perspective, shame appears to be one of the most important human affects, playing its part in the process of socialisation as well as the search for self (Hultberg, 1988 p110). Adler (1918) mentioned shame as a separating affect but also as a connecting affect underlining its great importance in human society.

*"[Shame] is a product of human relatedness and as such impossible to exclude from the life of the human soul. Human society would be impossible without this affect."*

(Adler, 1918 p225).

Shame therefore reflects the interplay between inner and outer worlds: on the one hand, it maintains the structure of society by ensuring that the internalised norms and rules operate through the consciences of the individuals; on the other, the impact of culture on personality is mediated through shame founded on the fear of rejection (Kaufman & Raphael, 1984, p57). Clearly, a difficulty remains in determining the causal connection; it could be argued that culture and cultural norms determine or even 'construct' emotional experiences, such as shame (Harré,1986; Lutz & White, 1986, Walbot & Scherer, 1995) but it is just as possible (if not more so) that emotions contribute to what we deem to be "culture".

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5Alongside pride, guilt and embarrassment: see Tangey and Fischer (1995).

The actual social consequences of shame are represented as being profoundly alienating and isolating, marking people out as unworthy or deficient (Kaufman & Raphael, 1984 p59). Particular societies and cultures condemn as dishonourable certain personal traits and perceived social weaknesses. One of the most common faults regarded as shameful is poverty, which according to Wurmser (1981) has been considered "a disgrace since antiquity" (p33). Personal characteristics such as dependency on others, a reputation as a loser, faults of character and attitude or betrayal, treason and cowardice are all commonly shameful. Nevertheless Mesquita & Frijda (1992) provide evidence that there are cultural differences in the events and the underlying values which provoke shame.

Shame can also be generated in a number of key institutional settings: the family, the peer group, school and work. As Hultberg (1988) indicates, the consequences are clear and absolute - a person who is put to shame is placed beyond the norms of society and shunned, almost ceasing to be considered a human being, whereas someone who is found guilty can be punished according to the laws of that society and yet still remain a person even though they may undergo a change of identity (eg a criminal, a bankrupt etc.). Furthermore, it appears that, from a socio-cultural perspective, shame is not solely a personal matter, since it can be also "borrowed" from the self-exposure of others with whom one identifies (Lynd, 1958). In this process, which is largely an unconscious one, the potential exists to become ashamed of one's family, of a friend, or of one's ethnic group or nation with no less poignancy:

*"...shame for one's parents can pierce deeper than shame for oneself.'"*

(Wurmser 1981, p46).

What is shamed consistently must be hidden from view and hence, it is argued that not only is shame the source of our cultural taboos (e.g. sex, sexuality, emotional expression, failure etc.) but there is also a strong taboo attached to shame itself (i.e. the shame of being ashamed) (Kaufman & Raphael, 1984).

The dynamics by which cultures and their institutions inflict and perpetrate shame are multifarious. One process of internalised shame consists of active attempts at bringing about punishment on others. In an interpersonal context, these "shaming" procedures will include punishing actions such as a tone of contempt, specific types of rejection, denigrating looks, certain

tones of speech, or outright belittling, mockery or pillorying. Piers and Singer (1953) describe this as a form of masochism. Still others turn shame from "a passive experience of humiliation into the active form of humiliating others" (Wurmser 1981, p47). In this manner, shame is reproduced and what might be considered as a cycle of abuse is maintained. Families are the predominant instruments of culture in this respect:

*" Shaming patterns are deeply rooted in analogous scenes from the parent's own childhood scenes that have become imbedded in the parent's memory but are now reactivated and passed directly to the next generation."*

(Kaufman, 1993, p37).

In addition to the family setting, the peer group and school setting are powerful cultural arenas in which scenes of shame and shaming play out but the stage is even more extensive according to Kaufman (op cit.):

*" Shame is a universal dynamic in child-rearing, education, interpersonal relations, psychotherapy, ethnic group relations, national culture and politics and international relations."* (p7).

**Functions and dynamics of shame**

From the psychological and socio-cultural overviews, it is clear that shame has both adaptive and non-adaptive functions at individual and collective levels. Hultberg (1988), synthesising aspects of depth psychology and anthropology in his analysis of shame, distinguishes two essentially different types of shame, one at the social level, the other at the individual, both of which he interprets as adaptive. Hultberg refers to these variously as 'shame on the skin' or 'deep shame', after Heller (1985). The first serves a social function, ensuring membership of human society through conformity while the second protects the intégrity of the individual from violation by the collective.

This latter function is paralleled in Wurmser's (1981) writings:

*"Shame protects privacy; it functions as a guardian against any outer power that might exploit weakness in the essential realms of the self and interfere with one's own inner logic."* (p66).

The psychological consensus however would be that in moderate doses, shame will lead to optimal development (Lewis 1992) and, while too little

will lead to an inability to self-correct (Kaufman, 1993), too much will be overly-restrictive and destructive of the person:

*"Shame may also be excessive and when it is it can be traumatic"*

(Levin, 1967 p271).

From a counselling perspective, Bradshaw (1993), popularising the role of shame in our everyday lives, distinguishes between healthy and toxic shame. For Bradshaw, healthy shame is "an emotion which signals us about our limits" and "keeps us grounded" (p4). Like many from the broad psychoanalytic tradition, the acquisition of shame in individuals is linked by Bradshaw to Erikson's second psychosocial stage of development ('autonomy versus shame', at around fifteen months after basic trust has been established)[6]. Toxic shame, on the other hand, is regarded as dysfunctional. Kaufman (1985) describes it as the core of most forms of emotional illness, experienced as an all-pervasive sense of being flawed and defective as a human being, whilst Bradshaw (1993) argues that:

*" Toxic shame is no longer an emotion that signals our limits, it is a state of being a core identity.....Toxic shame is a rupture of the self with the self"* (p10).

Shame which is internalised endures and becomes a 'characterological style' - a shame-based person who will not only guard against exposing their inner self to others but more significantly, will guard against exposing him/herself to him/herself (Kaufman, 1993). From a personal survival viewpoint, it is essential for the individual to find means of defending against this exposure. As strategies to defend the ego are developed, internalised shame becomes less and less conscious, *"it protects one from the trauma of exposure to others and ultimately from the trauma of rejection."*

( Levin, 1967 p268).

These processes through which people handle and respond to shame experiences are conceptualised in terms of the well-established ego defence mechanisms (Freud, 1959; H. Lewis, 1987) of repression, denial, projection,

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[6]Erickson (1950) argued that as trust grows, an emotional or interpersonal bond of mutuality between child and caretaker forms, which is crucial for the development of a sense of self and self worth. If children can express their growing sense of autonomy without the withdrawal of love and also have good modelling of healthy shame, then they will develop an appropriate sense of shame, creating "a balance and limit for (one's) new found autonomy" (p6) and also the ability "to seek new information and to learn new things" (p9).

transference, displacement, alongside others which have been hypothesised specifically in relation to shame including emotional substitution, bypassing and ideation. (H. Lewis, 1987, Scheff 1982, Lewis, 1992). Although these strategies are primarily psychoanalytic in origin, the dynamics of repression are increasingly being operationalised within an information-processing framework. Commonly then, as shame experiences accrue, the images created by those experiences are considered to be recorded in a person's memory bank with any attached emotions repressed and unresolved. Nathanson (1993) refers to this process as "script" theory, after Basch (1975)[7]. For these theorists, scripts are built up through human brain activity, which constantly compares sequences of stimuli-affect-response for patterns. Where there is similarity, these sequences are grouped into families of scenes bound by intense emotional responses (eg shame), which are then laid down in memory and are easily triggered by similar patterns of incoming information to the point that there may be a disproportion between *"the all-engrossing shame and the seemingly trivial provoking event.."*

( Nathanson, 1993, p4/5).

One of the everyday problems arising from this process is that individuals are likely to be affected by sub-conscious auditory messages (attacking self-esteem) and associated emotions (anger, humiliation etc.) but without any material awareness of the source. Thus, in line with Lewis's (1992) analysis, this suggests that unacknowledged shame exerts its detrimental force in two main ways; firstly through the individual not understanding what is happening and secondly causing behaviour that is difficult to account for since it is unavailable as an explanation. He adds that repressed shame, from clinical experience and evidence, can be converted into psychic difficulties likely to be expressed in range of symptoms, whether personal (physical/mental) or interpersonal.

**Consequences of shame**

At the individual level, there is a growing body of evidence demonstrating the negative consequences of intense shame. For instance, from

[7]See also Bradshaw, 1992 (pp12-13) for a similar idea but employing different terminology. For Bradshaw, the verbal imprints of shame remain in memory as do the visual images of the shaming scenes. A process of 'snowballing' such that as each new shaming experience takes place, a new verbal imprint and visual image attach to the already existing ones forming 'collages' of shaming memories. As the years go by, very little is needed to trigger these collages of shame memories - a word, a similar facial expression or scene can re-stimulate.

psychoanalytic case work, Levin (1967 p271) identified the significant role played by shame in narcissistic disturbances[8]. Additionally, pathological shame has been discussed by Nathanson (1987), Lewis (1987), Scheff (1987) as manifesting in rage or depression, and in extreme forms, the individual can experience deterioration of the self to the point of psychosis (Lewis, 1992, p162). Taking a less pathological view, Bradshaw (1993) has described a wide range of clinical symptoms associated with shame in everyday experience, expressed commonly in compulsions, co-dependencies, addictions, perfectionism and the drive to superachieve resulting in individual and family breakdowns. Using a more empirical approach to shame, Harder (1993) found correlations between measures of shame, interpersonal sensitivity and psychoticism whereas in the context of adolescent studies, Reimer (1996) implicated shame in problems of self-esteem and developmental psychopathology while Shreve (1991) places shame as a central component in adolescent suicidal behaviour.

At the interpersonal and system level, there is less clarity about the damaging impact of shame and how this might operate. Evidently, intense shame creates distancing in relationships, difficulties with intimacy (Lewis 1992) and abusive relationships (Kaufman, 1989). However what remains less explicit is the process by which widespread acts, experienced as personally injurious, are collectively sanctioned as acceptable. Sociologists Berger and Luckmann (1979) would argue that shaming, like any other social behaviour, is simply a product of our social construction of reality. Thus we act in habitual ways which are socially agreed upon and these become "legitimised". After being legitimised for a while they become unconscious. We no longer question them. With respect to shame however, this explanation does not adequately explain the dynamic relationship between individual and collective behaviour. However, the concept of systematic social oppression (Jackins, 1965,1988), found in re-evaluation co-counselling theory makes a useful additional contribution. Here it is suggested that an unconscious process of imposing hurts operates systematically in society from the earliest age, in order to condition people into roles. This process leads to patterns of self-invalidation, hopelessness, blind resentment, and irrationality being laid down in people, the distress of

[8]Lewis (1992, p165) believes that the term ' narcissism' should be reserved for the psychopathological. Narcissism as pathology has been interpreted in DSM-IIIR as a pretentious show of self-importance, such as an obsession with illusions of endless success, power, radiance, beauty or ideal love; a cool indifference or rage, subservience, shame, emptiness etc.)

which pulls them compulsively to re-enact and repeat what was originally done to them. It is hypothesised here that such a dynamic finds clear parallels in the negative cycle associated with shame and destructive shaming relationships.

**Shaming in schools**

The consensus reality in the education system is likely to be that the active shaming of children plays no role in the development of pupils in schools. Encouraging children to achieve, to behave appropriately, to take responsibility, to act morally and be realistic in their expectations does, though, require appropriate doses of direct feedback and measures of disciplinary control. Bradshaw (1993) however argues that:
*"Shaming has always been an integral part of the school system....Even though most modern forms of education no longer use dunce caps there are powerful sources of toxic shame still operating in the school system."* ( p61)

Despite the fact that there is little written on the role of shame and shaming in the educational system, schools could be considered to be a major institutional force in solidifying the internalisation of shame in people, As indicated by Fineman, (1993), shame is *"central to many aspects of organisational order..."* (p17).

Within schooling, it is possible that the negative process of shaming operates minimally at two levels. Firstly at the macro-level through destructive but nevertheless tacitly accepted educational processes. For instance, potentially powerful examples exist in mechanisms of assessment, grading and selection as well as those employed in the discipline and control of pupils. In terms of achievement, the school system promotes a shaming exposure when one gets "bad" grades which vitiates co-operation and motivates vicious competition. This is intensified when the grades are publicised. Bradshaw (op cit., p64) argues that shame-based children can take two routes in school (i) as they fail in school their internalised shame deepens or (ii) they superachieve, having to prove being OK by being exceptional on the outside. Unfortunately, accomplishments do not reduce internalised shame.

Additionally, such generally accepted disciplinary approaches as 'time out', being 'sent down' and exclusion, despite being condoned on the grounds of

the apparent proven effectiveness of behaviour management techniques, could in fact be queried as damaging shaming devices.

Secondly, at the micro-level, shame may be perpetuated through teachers' own interpersonal or pedagogical styles and repertoires in the classroom, which may be inclusive of sarcasm, ridicule, criticism and the wilful exposure of pupil failings. As Kaufman (1993) states:

*"The contemptuous teacher can mortify the spirit of a child"* (p38) and by directing cynical disapproval *"towards a child's thoughts, feelings or impulses, (and) the child will tend to inhibit or repress whatever is being shamed.* (Levin, 1967 p271).

Whilst the non-rational aspects of teacher functioning receive very little attention in the literature, there are a few lone voices (Crow, 1987; Knowles, 1988; Korthagen, 1993), in the teacher education context, that have recognised the importance of understanding the relationship between early childhood experiences with significant others, teacher role identity and classroom actions. Zeichner & Gore (1990), are most explicit when they state that *"deeply ingrained and partly unconscious feelings and dispositions developed as a pupil, exert a continuing influence on teacher activity."* (p319).

It is within this context that a small-scale exploratory study of teachers' experiences of shame was instigated in order to determine:

(i) if teachers could recall early educational experiences of feeling ashamed and if so, what types of shaming experiences would be identified;

(ii) what feelings, messages, attitudes were stimulated by the shaming experiences and did any of these endure;

(iii) how, if at all, do these early shaming experiences affect their current professional behaviour and attitudes.

**The study**

A research workshop was set up to which Primary School teachers, affiliated to the Graduate School of Education, QUB, were invited to attend. Six teachers (out of eighty circulated) self-selected and agreed to take part in the three-hour workshop.

The participants included four female and two male teachers aged between 28-50 years of age. Only two of the participants had ever previously been

involved in any similar workshop-type activities examining personal history and emotions.

The research workshop comprised the following four elements: (i) an introduction and contract (ii) an autobiographical scan using a time-line to identify specific positive and negative memories (including any on shame and shaming) from their primary school years (iii) a pencil drawing and written reflections on one of the negative shame episodes and (iv) a focus group discussion on the memories associated with the episode depicted in the drawings and any thoughts on the implications for present-day professional behaviour. To obtain retrospective data, potentially restricted by memory and unconscious mechanisms, life history methodologies were adapted and incorporated with creative methods, in an attempt to capture the socialising influence of these life experiences or " architecture of the self" that teachers bring to teaching (Pinar 1986) .

**Preliminary findings**

After some initial resistance, all participants were able to identify a series of positive and negative memories of their early schooling. Over twenty incidents in the trawl of negative memories were identified as involving shame or shaming (ranging from two to six per person). Whilst these were predominantly located in the later primary school years, several incidents were recalled from P1 and P2 classes, and in one instance, from the very first day of attending school.

From the autobiographical scan (time-line), incidents associated with negative or shameful feelings fell into the following categories:

• "Borrowed shame" incidents (after Reizer, 1943; Wurmser, 1981) - five instances were described in which participants were caught up in shame feelings induced through situations involving other pupils. For example:
*"In Primary five, a friend had alopecia and her wig fell off in front of everyone in the classroom: I still can see her running away".*

*"In Primary three, the teacher made Peter M go to the toilet in a bucket in front of the class because he asked to go out of the classroom too often. I felt pained for him".*

• Self-induced shame incidents - this involved a small number of episodes in which participants felt they had brought the shame upon themselves; that in

some way they had "let themselves down" rather than them being shamed. For instance:

*" In Primary one, not getting to the toilet on time and I was too shy to ask. The teacher did not make me feel embarrassed, I just felt utterly embarrassed myself".*

• Shaming experiences - this was by far the largest category and included memories in which teachers had physically humiliated them as pupils, punished them, isolated them, called them names, criticised or compared them unfavourably with others. In these instances, they had suffered felt-injustices at the hands of their teachers, such as:

*"..... being dragged by a teacher to the front of the class by the ears".*

*" On my first day of school when I got lost being shouted at in front of everyone" Where are you going Miss Prim?". I was mortified. I hated her for that".*

In some examples, the shame was triggered by peers through, for example. laughing and name-calling:

*"I recall Elaine M saying that we were poor and my shoes were old. I wished the ground would open up".*

*"I was constantly called 'four-eyes' and 'fatty'.*

Analysis and reflection on the participants' drawings of specific shame episodes produced the greatest depth and detail in terms of what *"was happening inside a person when shame was triggered, how the mechanism registered in the interpersonal world.....and the effect on thinking....(and)....the entire range of emotionality"*

(Nathanson 1995 p2).

The six shame episodes recollected by the participants all centred on classroom incidents involving matters of ability, selection, comparison and exposure, including self-exposure. In all cases, the feelings stimulated could be recalled with immediacy, many of them following the classic patterns associated with the phenomenology of shame (H. Lewis, 1972; Lewis, 1992) For one teacher the issue resulted from the accepted system of team-selection:

*" As I am among the last to be chosen, I feel painfully self-conscious, unwanted, obvious, inferior, embarrassed and angry because when I am eventually picked, it's not because I am valued. I felt I wanted to leave because they didn't particularly want me anyway."*

For another, it was the painful sense of self-exposure, which resulted from an incident involving unfair comparison by her classroom teacher:
*" The feeling of being found out, that my own deficiencies, which I had suspected were there but were hidden, had been discovered and exposed. I was devastated".*

A male teacher who described an episode in which he had acutely embarrassed a fellow pupil roused feelings of *"utter embarrassment, shame, humiliation, self-criticism, a feeling of genuine sorrow at having put the boy through it."* which led him later in discussion to be *"amazed at what was in there - that something hidden could be so powerful!"*
In the focus group discussion, the majority of the teachers were surprised at the poignancy and rawness of the feelings despite the passage of time, thus lending some support to the dynamics of repression associated with shame (Basch,1975, Bradshaw 1993, Nathanson 1995 etc.).

Reflecting on the consequences of these shaming episodes, the participants were clearly able to identify personal decisions which they made as a result.
- *'Never to set myself up for selection';*
- *'The consequence was a decision not to learn the spellings and to this day I cannot spell';*
- *'I have tried never to deliberately humiliate anyone since';*
- *'Particular appearances are important if you want to be accepted';*
- *'Never to risk: don't try unless you know you are going to get it right.'*

Subsequently, some of these had resulted in decisions about the appropriate treatment of others and have become incorporated into their own personal, professional code of behaviour as teachers:
*" Although I have been an authoritarian teacher for many years I learned on that day to single a person out is the worst thing you can do to anyone. I also learned you cannot force someone to do something if you have deeply offended them."*

*" I am still aware of how powerful teachers are in the eyes of their pupils. I learnt that then.. ..how damaging it can be to a pupil if a teacher uses their position to diminish a child in any way."*

*"I am very aware now of one-upmanship in class and I always jump to stamp it out."*

*" I never get 'captains' to pick teams, I set up a system that selects the teams impartially to avoid children feeling left out or rejected."*

*"I have not been conscious of it but on thinking back, I would never refer a pupil to the Principal nowadays for misbehaviour: as a result, I would try to deal with the situation myself..."*

There were few instances reported in which the participants spontaneously acknowledged that the shaming episodes had consequently led to them having difficulties with pupils culminating in them repeating or re-enacting shaming scenes. This is hardly surprising for a number of obvious reasons, including the difficulty of ' owning up' in such a public arena and also the problems associated with teachers' awareness of their own 'unconscious' behaviour and motivations. Despite this, two of the teachers recognised the potential for re-enactment. One teacher described the potential associated with projection in terms of a 'personality clash':
*"A wee girl I taught last year: she was plain with glasses, was bright and always trying to please. We had a 'personality clash'. I felt so irritated by her. She must remind me of myself at that age. It was such a struggle to teach her."*

Another suggested that the learning which ensues as a result of such an incident is so deep and powerful that it outweighs and justifies any hurt that might be caused:
*" I was hurt by that teacher then but I never forgot the message and now I know that if you want some kids to learn, you've got to push them and if that means a bit of humour and sarcasm occasionally , then that's what it takes."*
This teacher statement exemplifies the concept of 'internalisation' and has clear links with Jackin's (1965, 1988) conceptualisation of how systematic social oppression operates from the individual across the generations.

In summary, it is clear from the preliminary data obtained from these case studies that teachers' exposure to early shame experiences typically contributes, in their view, to positive approaches to teaching and a determination to ensure consciously that a similar hurtful learning experience is not perpetrated on pupils by them as teachers. There were only two teachers who recalled incidents in which there were parallels between some current teaching behaviours and what had happened to them in the past. What became obvious to these teachers and to all in the focus group was the potentially detrimental impact of these unconscious associations on present-day teacher-pupil interactions. Any patterns emerging from this preliminary investigation of the cycle of shame in teaching must be considered tentatively. The sample size is small and may have an in-built bias due to having self-selected on the topic.

**Conclusions**

Shame and shaming both operate in teachers' professional behaviour and in school systems. It is possible to help teachers identify early educational shaming events from their own experience. These vary in their degree of intensity and seriousness but they are replete with feelings of humiliation, exposure and a desire to hide. Many of these experiences still have potency in the present day but most of the teachers in the current exploratory study identify positive learning outcomes for their professional roles, as a result of their identified shaming episode. A number of teachers did however acknowledge difficulties arising from these incidents in relation to their subsequent treatment of pupils thus providing skeletal support for the potential role of schools in perpetuating a cycle of shaming experiences. On the basis of the evidence obtained in the study, however it could be argued that all the participants' explanations and understandings may have been operating at the level of 'espoused theories' (see Day, 1999) rather than necessarily being operationalised in their practice.

The challenge for researchers lies in gaining access to what remains unacknowledged or more deeply repressed shame experiences and finding the means to authenticate such data. Particularly intense or prolonged experiences of shame are accepted as being capable of literally erasing the contents of consciousness (Kaufman 1993, p63) to the point that *"shame can cause a loss of memory"* (Lewis, 1992 p121). Further systematic research

methods, carefully employing autobiographical and creative methods,[9] to address unconscious experience, need to be developed. Nevertheless, at a more heuristic level, it is suggested that teacher education (both initial and continuing) needs to devise appropriate contexts within which are contained opportunities for self-awareness and reflection on significant formative, educational experiences and the "living contradictions" these may embody (Whitehead, 1989, 1996). This would aim to ensure that contagions associated with early destructive incidents, where they exist, are not transferred and replicated, whether at the individual or system level. Korthagen (1993) believes that *"teachers can learn to subject their own behavior to a critical analysis and to take responsibility for their actions"* and that such an idea meets *"the long felt need for a kind of teacher education which transcends mere training in the use of behavior competencies."* (p317).

[9] See Korthagen (1993, pp321- 324) in which he describes the rationale and techniques for becoming aware of the non-rational (right hemisphere) processes, including the use of metaphors, drawing, painting, photographs, George Kelly's repertory grid and guided fantasies. He does not suggest that these be used for research purposes but they have the potential to be adapted and incorporated.

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